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A DYNAMIC CHARTER FOR RURAL EDUCATION.

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ALTHOUGH WE ARE PRESENTLY WITNESSING AN INCREASING EXODUS FROM FARMS TO URBAN CENTERS, IN THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE FARMING AREAS WILL FILL WITH PEOPLE AS THE POPULATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE. PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE EVENTS ARE BECOMING CLEARLY DEFINED, AND IF AN ATTEMPT IS TO BE MADE TO COPE WITH THESE PROBLEMS, A UNIFIED TEACHING PROFESSION MUST BE CREATED AT ALL ECHELONS OF EDUCATION. REORGANIZATION OF DISTRICTS IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO PROVIDE NECESSARY LEVELS OF EDUCATION FOR MOST CHILDREN. MULTIPURPOSE HIGH SCHOOLS AND COMBINED LIBERAL ARTS AND TECHNICAL CENTERS ARE NEEDED TO MEET OUR GROWING NEED FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION. A CULTURE-CENTERED CURRICULUM IS NEEDED, INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL AS WELL AS NATIONAL VIEWS. FINANCIAL RESOURCES SHOULD BE INCREASED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT EDUCATION CREATES RESOURCES RATHER THAN DEPLETES THEM. INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS SHOULD ENCOURAGE, THROUGH STUDENT AND ADULT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, THE SPREAD OF MODERN TECHNIQUES TO ALL COUNTRIES. THIS SPEECH WAS DELIVERED TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL EDUCATION, NEA (PITTSBURGH, PA., SEPTEMBER 29-30, 1961). (DA)

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SPEAKER: HALE AARNES, Department of Education and Psychology,
North Dakota State University, Fargo

TOPIC: "A DYNAMIC CHARTER FOR RURAL EDUCATION"

Place: Ballroom 1

The dimensions of the contemporary world are fluid.

The physical aspects of this fluidity are seen in both the changing aspects of our national countryside and in the "race to the moon."

The political turmoil can be noted in Berlin, or in Katanga, or in Algeria, or in Brazil -- and tomorrow another and unsuspected area could easily push its troubled presence into the uneasy chronicle of these days.

Often our considerations center on Berlin and the Iron Curtain.

One thought about the Iron Curtain deserves more than fleeting attention. We should realize that such a "curtain" can exist for an extraordinarily long period of time.

For example, in 732 A. D., the Saracens, who had just completed the conquest of Spain, were given a stunning defeat at Tours, in south France, by Charles "The Hammer" Martel. The Frankish victory stopped the Saracen onrush, but a "Crescent Curtain" shut Western Europe off from Asia and Africa. The Curtain held tight until, finally, in 1529 A. D., the Turkish army failed in its Seige of Vienna. The "Crescent Curtain" was raised. Raised after having been in place for seven-hundred-ninety-seven years.

If history does repeat itself, we may confront the Iron Curtain for a tedious stretch of years.

In a tightly knit world the fluidity of economic, medical, and sociological factors causes the threat of imbalance at every moment of unemployment, oil discovery, gold price shift, or epidemic outbreak.

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Perhaps the most consequential, and ultimately disturbing, fluidity is to be found in the philosophical (and psychological) flux which faces Post-Modern Man.

The philosophical problem is brilliantly set forth in the Saturday Evening Post of August 26, 1961. Huston Smith, M.I.T., professor of philosophy, presents an article (in the Post's "Adventures of the Mind" series) titled, "The Revolution in Western Thought." The article is worth your thoughtful examination.

Here, briefly, is a sample of Smith's important concept: "Frontier thinkers are no longer sure that reality is ordered and orderly. If it is, they are not sure that man's mind is capable of grasping its order. Combining the two doubts, we can define the Post-Modern Mind as one which, having lost the conviction that reality is personal, has come to question whether it is ordered in a way that man's reason can lay bare." (p. 54)

Thus it is evident that we live in a fluid world. The bomb shelters you are planning to build in your schools and your own backyards are a part of this evidence. The bomb shelters indicate that fluidity means problems that are cruel and pressing. We must bear in mind, however, that fluidity also is a sign on the highway along which we travel as we try to adapt ourselves more intelligently to our universe.

This paper will concern itself with the relationship of our fluid world to the problems of rural education and a diminishing agricultural population.

In thinking with you about this major policy question I will try to present some of the concepts which are available to us. In the main I will not discuss the available statistical evidence for I know that you are aware of it.

Permit the recommendation that you read two books.

Ritchie Calder's "After the Seventh Day" was published by Simon and Schuster. It states a veiw of yesterday and the immediate tomorrow which is valuable for all educators -- rural, and urban.

Perhaps you have all read the Harpers publication, by Martin Mayer, "The Schools." This is a wise and witty book and helps provide the perspective we need.

The theme of this paper is a brief and basically simple recommendation to you. It also deals with books.

Those of us who are interested in rural education must write our own book. We must write rapidly, courageously, and intelligently. We must write for all the boys and girls, rural and urban, who will serve, in their turns, as citizens of the United States during our period of national challenge, we must write for the next five-hundred years.

This will be a lengthy book for it will deal with important issues. The issues are complex and subject to several solutions. Thus the book must be democratically oriented to provide a multi-phased set of solutions.

In the following paragraphs the chapters will be outlined. Twelve chapters will be suggested. You will note chpaters to be added and those which should be deleted. I do not ask that you concur with the chapter list. You are asked, however, to agree to devote a part of your professional energies to the immediate creation of this book.

The title of the book will be "A Dynamic Charter for Rural Education." From the title let us go to an analysis of the chapters.

Chapter One will consider long-range planning. It will contain four major sub-divisions. The first of these will examine diminishing farm populations. The second section will note that cities, and certain towns, in agricultural regions will experience population growth rather than decline. The next section will indicate an awareness of the need for more food, produced by fewer farmers, as the population of many world areas continues to multiply. This food is a needed safety value. Some day the people of Red China must be given an adequate diet. Our national conscience cannot ignore this challenge.

In its final section, Chapter One will point out that eventually population growth will cause the farming areas to fill with people. We do not presently know about the future occupations of these people. But every educator in this room knows, clearly and completely, that one day living space will be a major human problem.

To highlight the problem of agricultural population let me cite one example. Last year, in a graduate examination, I heard the question, "How many farmers are currently operating in our state?" The reply was "Forty thousand." Next came the question, Using the best available techniques, how many farmers would be needed to produce our present output?" The reply, "Twenty thousand." Then a third question, "Considering the possible advances

in production techniques, how many farmers will be needed ten years from now?" The reply, "Ten thousand."

We do have a problem. Following chapters will suggest certain avenues to solution.

Chapter Two we should have written twenty-five years ago. Here we will set up the creation of a Unified Teaching Profession. A profession which will include all certified teachers at each educational level--kindergarten through the university.

Salary-wise this pattern will insure a basic salary for the high school teacher whether he is in Evanston, Illinois or Tower City, North Dakota.

This profession will select, educate, certify, evaluate, and discipline its members in a way that will reward master teachers and master administrators. This pattern of operation will insure a far greater number of artist-teachers than are now available.

Next, the mass of confusion and thorns which we call reorganization.

One of our North Dakota State University graduate students, Mrs. Catherine Rognlie, in a Master's paper titled, "A Tentative Plan for a County System of Education in North Dakota" suggested a plan for reorganizing the schools of this state. Mrs. Rognlie's work was supplemented by that of other graduate students who studied this problem.

Daring and imaginative, yet sound, the paper suggests that North Dakota's present fifty-three counties and three-hundred-thirty-seven high schools be replaced by seventy-nine high schools (and districts) in fourteen counties.

You will note this plan for reorganization deals with political as well as educational aspects of the basic problem. It is time for educators, political scientists, and practicing political leaders to join hands in solving the problems of reorganization. This is true because these twentieth-century days have imposed an obligation to redesign our county political structures. Plato was right when he saw education as a part of the governmental function of the people. Democratic processes give us the tools with which to provide educational sub-divisions which can give effective education to our young people. Reorganization is necessary if we wish to give truly fine educational opportunities to most of our children. Can we do less?

(Should any of you wish to examine Mrs. Rognlie's paper, I have a copy here.)

In Chapter Four, we will examine the kinds and types of schools from the kindergarten through the college. We will look long and critically at both elementary and junior high schools. There is some chance that we may create both a multi-purpose high school and a combination of liberal arts college and technicum that can adequately serve the growing needs of a nation whose enterprises are increasing more rapidly than her supply of educated citizens.

Chapter Five will be devoted to the curriculum. It will feature a culture-centered curriculum that raises its eyes beyond the study of the Greek-Jewish origins and gives each of our young people, from elementary school through college, a view of our neighbors in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

There will be other curricular adaptations and innovations and they will be based on a careful, and fearless study of what we can predict and project concerning the future needs of man in an age of planet exploration.

Financial support, budgets, and administrative arrangements will make up the meat of Chapter Six.

There will be a careful study of real financial support based on all available resources and founded on the idea that schools do not exhaust resources, rather schools and universities create resources.

Long-range budgets, six-year budgets, that permit planning will be introduced.

Administrative patterns will be modified so that all administrators can remain in contact with the center of education, the classroom.

In Chapter Seven, we will write of articulation between high school and college. Here we will point out that students with I.Q.'s of 120 can combine the final two years of high school with the first two years of college. This major break through will provide a new educational dimension. Such students, at seventeen or eighteen, will receive both the high school diploma and the Associate in Arts degree. This venture may cause the reorganization of school and college athletics, but will give us a younger crop of excellent professional students and thus will add countless years to the professional service these people can give to a needy world.

Then we will turn to the educational potential in Agricultural, Home Economics, and Vocational Education.

Here we will begin to construct more adequately than ever before those patterns for the education of those who are not college bound. We will not disregard the need for college and university training for the men and women who are truly talented in these fields. Our attention also will be directed to the whole continuum of adult education.

We will re-examine our concept of work and education. We will look carefully at the scientific education which every man needs in a scientific age. (Nor will our total program disregard the humanities. This matter was the topic of Chapter Five.) The relationships between work and education can be explored in depth. As Dr. Frank Cyr is fond of saying, "Neither Jesus nor Socrates used a classroom in our restricted sense of that term.

In all of this we will be aware of the needs of rural youth. We will also think of urban youth for no one knows where our mobile citizens will live. Nor do we know how many times they will move during a life time.

In Chapter Nine we will, with the help of our friends in Economics and Business Administration and Chemistry, devote our attention to the economic facets of life in rural United States.

The preservation of private business draws continual attention. The so-called "family size farm" and the small local business are of interest in an era when business grows larger and when such institutions as churches move toward centralization of administrative operation.

The place of chemistry in agriculture deserves the attention of the educator who wants to understand the full trends of farming as a developing technology.

It is sufficient here to mention the need for thought about the values of rural life in the contemporary world. Here research will perhaps replace nostalgia as we try to understand what rural life is actually coming to mean.

Chapter Eleven will introduce the subject of international agricultural relations. We have begun these programs with student exchanges and in other effective programs. If we have anything to offer the development of agricultural productivity world-wide, we must study the methods of such contributions.

Farmers from all the world should visit our farmers. In like manner, our rural people, adults and youth alike, should be given the opportunities to familiarize themselves with international agriculture.

Such programs might help create a way toward peace.

Our book will close with Chapter Twelve.

Here we will set out the roots of our charter. This charter will be a dynamic continuum of long-range educational and political planning. Here should shine forth our basic philosophy with its foundations in our national aspirations for peace, abundance, and wisdom for all men.

The changes contemplated in our book can come only after our educators have motivated a nation. As St. Paul set Christianity on its way through his masterful persuasion, so you, our educators, must use all skill and courage to activate a great program. Education is our only sure link with tomorrow. This fact must become commonplace knowledge and an active, daily ingredient in the thinking of the people of the Unites States. This calls for hard work and I know you will do it with diligence and with love.

The practical accomplishment of the goals set forth in this book, our book, may well call for the enactment of a new Morrill Act. A Morrill Act to include not only the university but also the whole broad complex of education. A Morrill Act designed for the contemporary world and patterned to fit the educational needs of rural people of all ages. Educators and political leaders and public-service-minded citizens can join hands in the development of such a dramatic piece of legislation. Rural education should serve no small goals -- a new Morrill Act would be a great goal.

This chapter, and this book, will close with a set of working principles which will help the educators of the United States plan to efficiently and bravely dedicate themselves to the centuries of teaching and research that lie ahead in man's struggle to understand himself and his universe.